

will tell you, America is great. This is for our service men and women that we pass this in a bipartisan way.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. QUINN). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. SAM JOHNSON) that the House suspend the rules and concur in the Senate amendments to the bill, H.R. 3365.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds of those present have voted in the affirmative.

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the Senate amendments to H.R. 3365.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Texas?

There was no objection.

WAIVING POINTS OF ORDER AGAINST CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 2559, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 429 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 429

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the bill (H.R. 2559) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2004, and for other purposes. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

The rule waives all points of order against the conference report to ac-

company H.R. 2559, Military Construction Appropriations Act for Fiscal Year 2004, and against its consideration. The rule provides that the conference report shall be considered as read.

This conference report provides funds for all types of construction projects on military installations here in the U.S. and abroad. The projects range from barracks and housing to training ranges and runways.

Mr. Speaker, we are asking a lot of our military today, and our military personnel on active duty know they will be deployed overseas and perhaps on dangerous missions. So we want to provide them a quality of life for themselves and for their families that will allow them to serve, knowing their families will be taken care of with good health care and good housing.

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We must honor the most basic commitments we have made to the men and women of our Armed Services. We must ensure a reasonable quality of life to recruit and retain the best and the brightest to America's fighting forces. Most importantly, we must do all in our power to ensure a strong, able, dedicated American military so that this Nation will be ever vigilant and ever prepared.

I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the key areas of the bill. First, \$1.2 billion is provided for troop barracks. This is a \$58 million increase from last year's level. This sends a positive message to our unaccompanied personnel stationed all around the world that their quality of life is a priority. It also provides \$2.7 billion to operate and maintain existing housing units and \$1.1 billion for new housing units. Military families also have a tremendous need for quality child care, especially single parents and families in which one or both parents may face lengthy deployments. To help meet this need, the bill provides \$16.5 million for child development centers.

In conclusion, we have focused our efforts on programs that directly support the men and women in our Armed Forces. We would like to do more, of course. We always have and we will always try to do that. The bottom line is this: With this conference report, we meet the military's critical infrastructure needs and their efforts to improve the quality of life for our men and women in the Armed Forces.

To that end, I urge my colleagues to support the rule and support the conference report.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. MYRICK) for yielding me the customary 30 minutes, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my appreciation for the bipartisan work of the conferees, and especially for the leadership of Chairman

KNOLLENBERG and ranking member EDWARDS, whose long service to meeting the needs of our uniformed men and women is well known to all the Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, in June when the House passed its version of H.R. 2559, it was \$41 million less than the President's request and was a \$1.5 billion cut from fiscal year 2003 funding levels. The conference report, while an improvement somewhat over the House-passed bill, is still defective. While it is \$199 million more than the amount requested by President Bush, it still reduces funding overall for military construction by \$1.38 billion from the fiscal year 2003 levels. Mr. Speaker, we simply cannot continue selling our military men and women short.

We have all seen the pictures from Fort Stewart in Georgia where our Guard and Reserves, returning wounded and sick from Iraq, are warehoused in the most miserable conditions. How can we stand on the floor of this House day after day, week after week declaring how much we support our military men and women when the funding providing for family housing in this conference report is over \$400 million less than last year? That total is even worse than what it was in the original House-passed bill. How can we stand on the floor of the House day after day and week after week and say that we are engaged in a long-term struggle against a global enemy and then cut military construction funds by \$600 million from last year's level?

Mr. Speaker, poor facility conditions are not only unsafe, they hamper readiness, contribute to low morale and decrease troop retention. According to the Pentagon, 180,000 of the 300,000 units of military housing are substandard. Sixty-eight percent of our military facilities have deficiencies so serious that they might impede mission readiness, or they are so deteriorated that they cannot support mission requirements. The current reductions in funding for construction in these facility categories means that the rate at which buildings are renovated or replaced has increased from 83 years to 150 years.

Mr. Speaker, I said it in June, and I am going to say it again. This is a national scandal. I keep hearing that since the events of September 11, we live in a changed world. I keep hearing how much we appreciate our Armed Forces, how much we appreciate their sacrifice and their service. Then why do we keep cutting and cutting and cutting the military construction appropriations bill? If we truly appreciate our military men and women, should we not give them and their families decent housing? I keep being told, just wait for next year and the funding will get better. Only it never gets any better. It just keeps getting worse. "Next year" should be now.

This conference report, while a small improvement overall from the House-passed bill, continues to be, in the